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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8582

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1259

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1365

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1271

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000922

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/MARCHESE/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER SY IS LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: JUMBLATT: SECOND GOVERNMENT WOULD  
ENDANGER THE WHOLE COUNTRY

Classified By: DCM William Grant. Reason: Section 1.4 (b).

SUMMARY

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¶11. (C) In a June 21 meeting with the Ambassador, Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and Druse leader Walid Jumblatt expressed his support for the Arab League's initiative to hold a national dialogue at the deputy level the following week (an initiative that crumbled shortly thereafter). Jumblatt remains adamantly opposed to a second government and believes the key is the presidency. Jumblatt clearly blames Syria for Lebanon's continuing political turmoil and deteriorating security situation; following the June 13 assassination of March 14 MP Walid Eido, more and more MPs are looking to go abroad. End summary.

MILD SUPPORT FOR (NOW DOOMED) ARAB LEAGUE INITIATIVE

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¶12. (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by Pol/Econ Chief, met with a noticeably somber Jumblatt in his home on June 21. Jumblatt expressed mild support for Arab League Secretary Amr Moussa's efforts to reignite a stalled national dialogue during his June 19 - 22 visit to Beirut. Jumblatt said Moussa, whose visit got off to a rocky start, was now convinced that a resumed national dialogue possible. He also reportedly accepted that issues previously agreed by the parties would provide the foundation for the talks, which would focus instead on remaining issues such as Palestinian arms outside the camps, the formation of the national unity government, and the upcoming presidential election. Jumblatt said this plan presented no dangers; the only risk would be any discussion of a second government, which "would endanger the whole country." Jumblatt did not think the Arab League would point fingers at Damascus, since the Saudis and others "don't want to squeeze the Syrians."

¶13. (C) Note. Jumblatt later called the Ambassador to report that Future movement leader Saad Hariri had just told him that Hezbollah would reject the talks unless they were limited to cabinet expansion, a position the Hariri camp could not accept. The following day (June 22) Jumblatt faxed us a copy of a proposed agreement that, had it been accepted by accepted by March 14 and March 8, would have led to the resumption of national dialogue talks at the deputy level on June 28. Instead, the initiative ended in failure: March 14 insisted that previously agreed issues (such as UNSCR 1701 and Siniora's seven points) not be touched, while March 8

refused to agree to any conditions before a new government is formed. End note.

LEBANON NEEDS CONSENSUS ON PRESIDENCY -- OR WE BECOME LIKE THE PALESTINIANS

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¶4. (C) Calling the Lebanese Armed Forces' (LAF) successes in Nahr el-Barid a "great achievement," Jumblatt said it was important not to sabotage it now with the creation of a second government. Visibly discouraged, he said the current "crisis will continue; the country won't be unified soon." Openly pondering what March 14 could give the opposition in order to secure its support for a national unity government, he stated firmly that there was no leeway on the presidency; Lebanon needs an "honest president." We need to find a consensus (Maronite) candidate for president who can lead us out of the crisis -- otherwise we will end up like the Palestinians, he said. The president should follow the lines of UNSCRs 1559 and 1701, he stressed, noting Hizballah's determination to maintain its right to maintain arms for the resistance. Free Patriotic Movement leader Aoun "would be a disaster for the LAF," he stressed.

¶5. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question as to whether Lahoud's threats to form a second government were real or mere scare tactics, Jumblatt, sighing deeply, said Syria had tried everything to intimidate March 14. Thanks to the support of the US and France, however, the GOL had held and Bashir (Assad) was losing, he said. But there was no doubt the June 13 assassination of March 14 MP Walid Eido was in response to the creation of the Special Tribunal, he hastened to add.

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¶6. (C) The Ambassador, noting Syria's recent closing of a third border crossing into Lebanon and suspicions that Syria was to blame for recent telecommunications disruptions in north Lebanon, asked whether a national unity government (which would include the pro-Syrian opposition) wasn't just another attempt to bring down the Lebanese government. Jumblatt replied that March 14 would need guarantees, i.e., that there will be no cabinet resignations until a new president is elected. And, he added, these guarantees would have to go beyond the borders to include Syria and Iran. Jumblatt later said former Syrian Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam had sent him a fax the day before claiming that Syrians were responsible for the June 17 rocket attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel, reportedly bringing the rockets from a Palestinian outpost in Biqa'.

FELTMAN